

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1250

INFO USMISSION USBERLIN IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BONN 14006

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT WB GW US UK FR UR

SUBJECT: GDR OBSTRUCTION OF TRANSIT TO BERLIN

REFS: (A) STATE 206862; (B) BONN 13914; (C) BONN 13913;
(D) BONN 13755

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE FRG HAS CALLED FOR ANOTHER MEETING OF THE TRANSIT COMMISSION, AT WHICH IT WILL REJECT THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED BY THE GDR ON AUGUST 18 AND CHARGE THE GDR WITH A VIOLATION OF THE TRANSIT TRAFFIC AGREEMENT. NEITHER THE BRITISH NOR THE FRENCH REMAINED UNABLE TO REACH A DECISION IN ITS AUGUST 20 MEETING ON AN ALLIED PROTEST TO THE SOVIETS. STILL STANDING IN THE WAY OF AGREEMENT ARE THE FRENCH INSISTENCE THAT A PROTEST SHOULD BE DELIVERED AT NO HIGHER THAN THE POLAD LEVEL IN BERLIN AND MORE SERIOUSLY, BRITISH INDECISION AS TO WHETHER ANY PROTEST
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SHOULD BE MADE AT ALL. THE UK EMBASSY STILL

PROFESSES CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT A PROTEST WHICH DOES NOT TREAT THE GDR "EVIDENCE" IN SOME DETAIL BUT BELIEVES THAT, NOW THAT THE FRG HAS DECIDED ON A FORMAL PROTEST IN THE TRANSIT COMMISSION, LONDON'S DECISION-MAKING WILL BE FACILITATED. THE FRENCH AND UK REPS WILL HOPE TO HAVE ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS BY THE NEXT BONN GROUP MEETING ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 23. END SUMMARY.

1. UPON RECEIPT OF INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN REF (A), US CALLED A SPECIAL MEETING OF BONN GROUP FOR AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 20. THAT REQUEST COINCIDED WITH FRG DESIRE TO REPORT ON CHANCELLERY DECISION CONCERNING RESULTS OF AUGUST 18 MEETING OF FRG-GDR TRANSIT COMMISSION (TC) REPORTED IN REF (B).

2. FRG REP (HENZE) REPORTED CHANCELLERY HAD DECIDED TO ASK FOR ANOTHER MEETING OF THE TC ON EITHER AUGUST 26 OR 27. IN PROPOSED TC MEETING FRG REP WILL SAY GDR ARGUMENTS IN EARLIER MEETING ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO JUSTIFY OBSTRUCTION OF TRANSIT ROUTES AND THAT THE GDR ACTION CONSTITUTED A VIOLATION OF THE TRANSIT TRAFFIC AGREEMENT (TTA). ACCORDING TO HENZE, EXACT LINE OF FRG ARGUMENTATION HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED. HE WAS UNABLE TO ANSWER A UK QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE FRG WOULD OFFER ONLY A GENERAL REFUTATION OF THE EARLIER GDR STATEMENT, OR WOULD ENGAGE IN A POINT-BY-POINT REJECTION OF GDR FACTUAL CLAIMS.

3. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE PROPOSED ALLIED DEMARCHE, HENZE SAID THAT FRG STILL FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO PROTEST TO THE SOVIETS CONCERNING THIS VIOLATION OF THE QA. HE ADDED THAT THE ALLIED PROTEST SHOULD NOT BE TOO DETAILED. HENZE STRESSED THAT SPEED WAS OF THE ESSENCE. THE PROTEST SHOULD BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, OPTIMALLY ON THE SAME DAY AS THE PROPOSED TC MEETING NEXT WEEK. SUCH ACTION WOULD DEMONSTRATE ALLIED UNITY AND WOULD ADD WEIGHT TO THE FRG STATEMENT TO BE MADE IN THE TC. CONCERNING THE LEVEL AT WHICH THE PROTEST SHOULD BE MADE, HENZE SAID THAT THE FRG

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HAD NO OBJECTION TO THE PROTEST BEING MADE BY THE CHAIRMAN POLAD IN BERLIN.

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4. FOLLOWING HENZE'S PRESENTATION, U.S. REP REPORTED INSTRUCTIONS FROM REF A. IN ANTICIPATION OF A RENEWED EXPRESSION OF BRITISH MISGIVINGS, WHICH UK REP (CARTER) HAD EXPRESSED TO US BILATERALLY EARLIER IN THE DAY, U.S. REP THEN SUMMARIZED U.S. POSITION AS FOLLOWS:

-- THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A SERIOUS VIOLATION OF WHAT FOR US WAS ONE OF THE CHIEF GAINS OF THE QA -- THE SOVIET GUARANTEE OF UNIMPEDED ACCESS TO BERLIN.

-- IT IS TRUE THAT THE STERNFAHRT WAS VIEWED BY THE GDR AS A SERIOUS PROVOCATION, AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE GDR REACTED. NEVERTHELESS THE REACTION TOOK THE FORM OF DECIDING TO PREVENT TRAVELERS FROM GOING TO
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BERLIN BECAUSE OF DISAPPROVAL OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN
BERLIN.

-- IN MANY INSTANCES IN THE PAST THE GDR AND THE
SOVIETS MADE IMPLIED THREATS TO TAKE SUCH ACTION. SUCH
A THREAT IS STILL OUTSTANDING, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH REGARD
TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EC VOCATIONAL CENTER. A
WARNING THAT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN WAS IMPLICIT IN THE
STATEMENT GIVEN THE FRG PERMANENT REPRESENTATION BY THE
GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY ON THE AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 12.

WE HAD PREVIOUSLY NOT BELIEVED THAT THE GDR WOULD
ACTUALLY CARRY OUT SUCH A THREAT, BUT NOW IT HAS HAPPENED
AND PRESENTS A REAL CHALLENGE TO US.

-- AS IT TURNED OUT, THE TASK OF THE GDR IN JUSTIFY-
ING ITS ACTION HAS BEEN FACILITATED BY THE FORTUITOUS
FINDING OF LITERATURE AND POSTERS ON TWO OR THREE OF
THE BUSES. HAD THEY TURNED BACK ONLY THESE TWO OR
THREE BUSES, THE CASE MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE DIFFICULT
FOR US. BUT IN FACT, THEY TURNED BACK EVERY BUS ONCE
THEY HAD SATISFIED THEMSELVES THAT THE PASSENGERS WERE
INTENDING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STERNFAHRT.

-- ONE DIFFICULTY WE MAY BE ENCOUNTERING IN
DECIDING HOW TO HANDLE THE PROTEST MAY BE THE FACT THAT
WE ARE TOO ACCUSTOMED TO DRAFTING RESPONSES, RATHER THAN
PROTESTS, AND THEREFORE PERHAPS OVERLY CONCERNED WITH
TECHNICALITIES.

-- IN THE U.S. VIEW, THE PURPOSE OF THIS INITIAL
PROTEST SHOULD BE TO HIT THE MAIN POINT, THAT THE
THREE ALLIES BELIEVE A GROSS VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED AND
THAT WE FIND THIS UNACCEPTABLE. WE MAY EVENTUALLY HAVE
TO GET INTO A DETAILED DISPUTE OVER INDIVIDUAL FRAGMENTS
OF EVIDENCE, BUT THAT WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE AT THIS STAGE.

-- IF WE WANT TO READ
BY GROMYKO AND, HOPEFULLY, BREZHNEV, IT SHOULD BE SHORT
AND TO THE POINT AND SHOULD BE DELIVERED AT AS HIGH A
LEVEL AS POSSIBLE. THIS IS WHY THE U.S. WOULD FIND
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THE BERLIN POLAD CHANNEL INADEQUATE AND UNACCEPTABLE.

-- THE FACT THAT THE FRG IS MAINTAINING A RELATIVELY
LOW POSTURE PUBLICLY IS UNDERSTANDABLE BECAUSE OF THE
CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION BUT IS IN ANY CASE IRRELE-

VANT TO THE FACT THAT GUARANTEED ACCESS IS IN THE FIRST
INSTANCE A MATTER BETWEEN THE FOUR POWERS, REGULATED BY
THE QA.

5. CARTER (UK) STATED THAT HE HAD NO
FRESH INSTRUCTIONS FROM LONDON SINCE THOSE REPORTED
YESTERDAY (REF C). ON A PERSONAL BASIS, HOWEVER, HE
SAID THE FACT THAT THE FRG HAD NOW DECIDED TO CALL A
NEW MEETING OF THE TRANSIT COMMISSION AND REJECT THE
GDR ALLEGATIONS WAS WELCOME AND WOULD, HE THOUGHT, HELP
EXPEDITE A UK DECISION.

6. CARTER NEVERTHELESS CONTINUED WITH AN EXPOSITION OF
THINKING WITHIN THE UK EMBASSY THAT WHILE IT WAS TRUE
THAT THE GDR HAD NO DOUBT VIOLATED THE SPIRIT OF THE
QA AND TTA, THERE WAS A DANGER THAT TOO GENERALIZED A
PROTEST WOULD LAY THE ALLIES OPEN TO A COUNTER-BLAST
FROM THE SOVIETS WHICH WOULD QUOTE GDR EVIDENCE IN
EXTENSO TO SHOW THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO VIOLATIONS.
THE MORE ONE EXAMINED THE MATTER, THE MORE ONE REALIZED
HOW SUBTLE AND CLEVER THE GDR HAD BEEN IN PRESENTING
ITS CASE. WE SHOULD AVOID RUSHING IN WITH A

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PROTEST THAT WOULD MEAN PUTTING OUR HEAD ON THE BLOCK
FOR THE SOVIETS.

7. CARTER SAID THE UK WAS TRYING TO ASSESS THE EVENTS
OF AUGUST 13 IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF INNER-GERMAN
RELATIONS AND ASKED WHETHER HENZE COULD PROVIDE COMMENTS
ON THE BROADER SUBJECT. HENZE EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT
THE GDR WAS NOT INTERESTED IN ESCALATION OF THE MATTER
AND THAT THIS SEEMED TO BE THE SOVIET ATTITUDE AS WELL.
HE THOUGHT THE EASTERN SIDE MIGHT REGRET THE OBSTRUCTION
OF TRAFFIC ON AUGUST 13, AS THAT WAS NOT THE BEST WAY
TO AVOID ESCALATION. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WOULD BE A
TEMPTATION TO DO THE SAME THING AT SOME POINT IN THE
FUTURE WHEN THERE WERE NO MORE SIMILAR RESTRAINING
FACTORS. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE FRG THOUGHT
THE EASTERN ACTION COULD NOT BE IGNORED.

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8. CARTER CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY DRAWING A DISTINCTION
ONCE MORE BETWEEN THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT OF THE
AGREEMENTS, FEELING THAT THE GDR HAD INVOKED THE LETTER
IN A VERY INGENIOUS WAY. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT A
GENERALIZED PROTEST MIGHT NOT BE SUFFICIENT. WHILE
STRESSING THAT THE BRITISH WERE NOT RULING OUT IN
ADVANCE THE IDEA OF A PROTEST, HE CONCLUDED THAT, THE
MORE THEY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE MORE DANGERS THEY SAW.

9. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DISCUSSION, THE POSITIONS
OF THE FOUR BONN GROUP MEMBERS WERE SUMMARIZED AS
FOLLOWS:

-- US: BELIEVES THERE HAS BEEN A VIOLATION
OF THE QA, FAVORS A PROMPT PROTEST AT A HIGH LEVEL, AND
AGREES WITH THE TEXT OF THE EARLIER BONN GROUP DRAFT
(REF D).

-- FRANCE: AGREES TO THE PRINCIPLE OF A DEMARCHE,
PROVIDED IT IS DONE AT THE BERLIN POLAD LEVEL.
FAVORS A TEXT THAT DOES NOT GO INTO TOO MUCH DETAIL BUT
HAS NO SPECIFIC COMMENTS AS YET ON THE AD REF BONN
GROUP TEXT. PARIS HAS SAID THAT IT WILL BE SENDING
COMMENTS ON THAT TEXT.

FRG: HOPES THE ALLIES WILL MAKE A PROMPT PROTEST, IF POSSIBLE NO LATER THAN THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TRANSIT COMMISSION ON AUGUST 26 AND 27. IS AGREEABLE TO DELIVERY AT THE BERLIN POLAD LEVEL. HAS NO SPECIFIC REACTIONS TO THE BONN GROUP TEXT, BUT THE FRG BONN GROUP DELEGATION HAS BEEN GIVEN LEEWAY TO AGREE ON A TEXT.

-- UK: IS UNDECIDED BOTH AS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF DELIVERING A PROTEST AND AS TO CONTENT. LONDON HAD SAID IT WOULD BE UNDESIRABLE TO DECIDE ON CONTENT UNTIL THE OUTCOME OF THE AUGUST 18 TRANSIT COMMISSION MEETING WAS KNOWN. NOW THAT THE BONN GROUP HAS INFORMATION ON THAT MEETING AND FRG INTENTIONS AS TO THE NEXT STEP, LONDON'S DECISION-MAKING WILL BE FACILITATED. LONDON HAS NOT YET DISCUSSED THE LEVEL
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AT WHICH A POSSIBLE PROTEST SHOULD BE DELIVERED.

10. AFTER THE BONN GROUP MET, HENZE TOLD US BILATERALLY THAT THERE HAD INITIALLY BEEN SOME DIS-AGREEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENTAL DISCUSSIONS AS TO HOW TO PROCEED. OFFICIALS FROM THE INNER-GERMAN MINISTRY, IN PARTICULAR, WERE ADVOCATING CAUTION, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF HONECKER'S AUGUST 12 ASSURANCES TO GAUS THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO ESCALATE MATTERS. (THE FACT THAT THESE ASSURANCES WERE GIVEN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS BEFORE THE TURNBACK OF THE BUSES SEEMED NOT TO HAVE WEIGHED UNDULY IN THE VIEWS OF ADVOCATES OF THE GO-SLOW POSITION). THE FOREIGN OFFICE URGED THAT THE ISSUE BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF THE LONG-RANGE PRINCIPLES AT STAKE AND NOT ON THE BASIS OF THE MOMENTARY STATE OF RELATIONS WITH THE GDR. GENSCHER CALLED VACATIONING CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT FROM THE MEETING TO GET HIS CONCURRENCE IN THE DECISIONS REACHED, AND HENZE STATED HE COULD ASSURE US CATEGORICALLY THAT BOTH GENSCHER AND SCHMIDT CONTINUED TO HOPE VERY MUCH THAT THE ALLIES WOULD MAKE A PROTEST TO THE SOVIETS.

11. ASKED WHETHER THE FRG STATEMENT THAT THERE WAS NO OBJECTION TO DELIVERY OF THE PROTEST AT THE BERLIN POLAD LEVEL ACTUALLY MEANT THAT THE CHANCELLOR

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WOULD PREFER THAT LEVEL AS A MEANS OF AVOIDING
ESCALATION, HENZE SAID THE PRIMARY GERMAN CONSIDERATION
WAS SPEED. THE FRG THOUGHT THAT AGREEMENT TO
DELIVERY OF THE PROTEST IN BERLIN WOULD PROBABLY BE
ESSENTIAL TO BRINGING THE FRENCH ALONG ON EARLY ACTION.

12. COMMENT: THE GERMANS MAY BE RIGHT ON THIS POINT.
ASSUMING THE BRITISH COME AROUND, THE ONLY REMAINING
ISSUE COULD TURN OUT TO BE THE MODALITIES OF DELIVERY.
WHILE WE CONTINUE TO FAVOR A DEMARCHE IN CAPITALS OR
IN MOSCOW AND FULLY AGREE WITH USBER'S REASONING
ON THIS POINT (USBER 1740, JUST RECEIVED), IT MAY IN
THE END PROVE NECESSARY TO SETTLE FOR THE BERLIN LEVEL
IF WE ARE TO GET AGREEMENT WITHOUT PROLONGED DELAY.

13. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF USING A
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HIGHER LEVEL THAN BERLIN DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH
AMBASSADOR WORMSER EARLIER TODAY (REPORTED SEPTTEL), AND
THE DEPARTMENT'S VERY HELPFUL STRONG POSITION ON THIS
SCORE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE REPORTED TO PARIS FROM THE
BONN GROUP MEETING. HOPEFULLY THE FIRMNESS OF OUR
VIEWS WILL TAKE EFFECT.

14. THE BONN GROUP WILL MEET AGAIN ON MONDAY AFTER-
NOON, AUGUST 23.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

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